

WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Monthly Report

May 2005

Welcome to the WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Monthly Report. To keep you informed of our division's activities, the report highlights progress and milestones reached in these areas:

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 - Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management
 - Announcements and Upcoming Events
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Division News

PT&R Division Says Good-bye to Ray Allred



Ray Allred, age 49 and a ten-year WSDOT employee in the Rail Office, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, April 16. He joined the Rail Office in February 1995 after a 15-year career in California as a railroad police officer and freight rate expert for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Prior to working for the railroads, Ray was an All-American defensive lineman for the Idaho State University Bengals and had been inducted into ISU's Football Hall of Fame in 2003.

Ray has been a strong advocate for railroads most of his adult life after obtaining an MBA with a concentration in truck/rail intermodal economics. He was WSDOT's lead expert on freight rail projects and an important voice on statewide freight policy issues. In addition, Ray's work was instrumental in the development of the nationally known

Washington State Grain Train Program.

New Revenue for Public Transportation and Rail

A lot of hard work went into getting the 2005 transportation revenue bill passed. We appreciate the efforts of all involved to acknowledge the transportation needs in Washington State and find ourselves in the enviable position among states to say we have a sustained commitment to funding transportation. This is a great promise to our state's residents and businesses. The challenge to WSDOT is clear - continue to deliver quality projects on time and on budget that the people and business of Washington state need to keep moving. Our pledge to the people of Washington is clear - make every dollar count!

Division staff is busy analyzing the 05-07 budget and associated programs and projects. With the passage of SHB2124, the Legislature created an Office of Transit Mobility in the Department. This bill creates new roles and responsibilities for the division. We will report in greater detail on the impacts of the new revenue package and other legislation in our next newsletter. For now, **our sincere thanks.**

Public Transportation

Intercity Public Transportation Plan Awarded to KFH Group

After completion of a competitive process, the KFH Group, Inc. was awarded a \$150,000 contract to develop an intercity and rural-to-urban public transportation service plan in Washington State.

The primary objectives of the plan include enhanced coordination and connectivity between public and private sector services, identification and filling of service gaps, improved connections between all modes of transportation, and consistent planning at the regional level. WSDOT selected the KFH Group and their sub contractors, Landsman Transportation Planning, LLC and David Raphael, based on their extensive expertise in rural intercity bus policy. Work on the plan will begin this spring and be completed by the end of the year.

WSDOT Presents Plenary Session at ADA Conference

Cathy Silins, Manager of WSDOT's Public Transportation and Commute Options Office, gave a presentation about WSDOT's programs and services at the "ADA Issues and Solutions Workshop" in Leavenworth on April 11-12, 2005. Highlights of WSDOT's presentation included information about the state's planning and policy development process, the update for Washington's Transportation Plan, and data gathering for the Transportation Access position paper. The two-day conference, sponsored by Pullman Transit and People for People, offered transportation providers information and training on serving customers with disabilities and issues that pertain to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

WSDOT and Columbia County Public Transportation Hosted Celebration

On April 19, 2005, WSDOT and the Columbia County Public Transportation (CCPT) hosted a community event to celebrate the establishment of CCPT as the state's 28th official transit system. At the event, WSDOT presented Columbia County Commissioners with a symbolic key representing the \$379,237 in public transportation grants awarded to the system in 2003-2005. WSDOT also delivered a new van purchased with state vanpool grant funds for CCPT's start-up vanpool program. County Commissioner Jones, CCPT's new transit system board chair, expressed how much the community values the public transportation service and thanked WSDOT for the support. Approximately 75 people attended the event including Debra Casey representing U.S. Congresswoman Cathy McMorris. The event received media coverage from the Dayton Chronicle and Walla Walla Union-Tribune.



Staff Conducted Site Visits with Public Transportation Grantees

In April, WSDOT's grants staff conducted nearly a dozen site visits with public transportation providers participating in WSDOT's public transportation grants program. On-site visits are conducted throughout the grant cycle to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and to provide assistance with grant management issues. Staff reviewed financial records, inspected vehicles, and met with managers from the following organizations:

- Appointment Keepers, College Place
- Columbia County Public Transportation, Dayton
- Valley Transit, Walla Walla
- Garfield County, Pomeroy
- Pullman Transit, Pullman
- Pullman Senior Citizens Association, Pullman
- Council on Aging – Whitman, Colfax
- Western Washington University, Bellingham
- Whatcom County, Bellingham
- Skagit PTBA/ Skagit Transit, Burlington
- Senior Services of Snohomish County, Mukilteo

Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

ACCT Presents Workshop at Tribal Transportation Symposium

Robin Phillips, ACCT's Administrator, gave a presentation at the 12th Annual Northwest Tribal Transportation Symposium in Shelton on April 27. The presentation highlighted strategies for developing coordinated tribal transportation programs. Robin explained how Gorge Link, a successful coordination project among five transportation providers in the Columbia Gorge area, could be used as a template for developing coordinated transportation projects.

Staff Meet with Transportation Providers for Statewide Trip Planner

ACCT staff continues to meet with public transportation providers across Washington to discuss the Statewide Trip Planner project and to develop agreements for sharing route and schedule information. In April, staff met with representatives from Greyhound, Pierce Transit, Twin Transit, and Mason Transit and scheduled meetings in May with many other transit providers.

The Statewide Trip Planner is a joint Washington and Oregon project to share on-line travel information for different modes of transportation including intercity bus, rail, and local transit statewide. The team expects completion of the first phase of the trip planner in the spring of 2006. Individual transportation provider websites will be accessible through the system as early as December 2005.



Training at National Conference Improves Understanding of ADA Issues

WSDOT's special needs transportation coordinator, Don Chartock, attended the National Association of ADA Coordinators Spring Conference on April 6–7. The conference provided an opportunity to review and discuss rules and changes in the interpretation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The sessions focused on accessible fixed route, complementary demand response, new accessibility guidelines, and current court cases. The training helps WSDOT with providing technical assistance to both transportation providers and riders on issues related to special needs transportation including explaining passenger rights under the ADA.

Passenger and Freight Rail



Looking up past the false ceilings (installed in the 1960's) to see the original ceilings.

Work Continues on King Street Station

Workers continue restoring Seattle King Street Station's 98-year-old Compass Room entry hall to its original appearance. This work, sponsored by Amtrak and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), is another step forward in the ongoing transformation of the busy historic station.

The Compass Room displays many of the original finishes that remain in the station today. Non-historic features of the room will be removed and replaced with new materials that replicate the original materials and detailing. The only remaining original chandelier will be rebuilt and installed in the center of the Compass Room ceiling.

Other station upgrades include new exterior canopies and lighting, refurbishing the main entrance at Third Avenue and King Street, and restoring long boarded-up windows in the Waiting Room in keeping with the historic character of the station. This phase of the work will be completed by summer 2005.

Recently completed work increased the size of the Waiting Room and, for the first time in 40 years, visitors can experience some of the Waiting Room's original architecture. The run down bathrooms also received a complete make over.

In 2004 over 600,000 people passed through King Street Station, the busiest train station in the Pacific Northwest. The station is currently served by 14 daily Amtrak intercity passenger trains and eight weekday *Sounder* commuter trains.



Crews carefully install the decorative plaster.

Rail Freight Moving Again Between Morton Mills and Port Of Tacoma

Almost ten years ago, a flood destroyed sections of the Tacoma Rail Mountain Division railroad between Tacoma and Morton. Bridges and tracks were washed out and lumber mills in Morton no longer had access to rail service, and more importantly, to the Port of Tacoma.

Today, thanks to a WSDOT freight rail rehabilitation grant in June 2004 (authorized in the 2003 Legislative Transportation Package), railcars are once again carrying freight from the mills to the port. Crews placed thousands of new rail ties and laid tons of ballast to stabilize the aging track bed. In early 2005, freight trains began transporting eastern Lewis County cedar fencing and beauty bark to markets in Texas, Georgia, Ohio and the eastern U.S. A new beauty bark loader was built for the line; it ships out an average of seven carloads of bark each week.



A 16-car freight train pulls out of Morton, the largest train since the track was re-opened

Amtrak Cascades Trains Repainted

This spring, two of the five Amtrak *Cascades* trainsets were taken out of service and sent to Tacoma for repainting in the standard color scheme of evergreen, double latté, and Castilian copper. The trains were also treated with a special clear coating to protect them from the elements, extend the paint life and reduce the number of trips to the train-washer in Seattle.



When the trainsets were first painted in 1999, just prior to delivery, they were not treated with the clear coating. During their first six years of service the paint took a beating from the harsh Pacific Northwest weather. Some customers complained about the faded paint on the Amtrak *Cascades* trains, but those comments should soon turn to compliments about these sleek, stylish trains.

Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management

CTR Task Force Continues Its Study of Options

The Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force appointed by the Governor continues its study of future program options in preparation for submitting its report to the Legislature in December 2005. State law dissolves the Task Force on July 1, 2006; however, the law also directs the Task Force to make recommendations to the legislature on whether the Task Force should continue, and whether it should maintain the same structure, role and responsibilities. It is expected that the legislature will review the December 2005 recommendations and determine the future of the program during the 2006 session.

As part of its work plan for preparing the report, the Task Force is considering many important issues relating to the program, including: 1) should CTR continue to be based on county boundaries or whether the program should be organized in others ways, such as along transportation corridors or planning regions? 2) should CTR should expand its focus beyond commuting travel? and 4) what additional methods or approaches should be used to evaluate progress and effectiveness in reducing employee commute vehicle trips?

The task force currently is charged with establishing program guidelines for the state's Commute Trip Reduction program, ensuring statewide consistency among county and local ordinances and reporting program performance to the Legislature every two years. The 28-member task force represents the varying statewide perspectives of citizens, businesses, state agencies, transit agencies, and local jurisdictions.

CTR Task Force Delivers Vanpool Report to Legislature

On April 6, the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force gave its first status report to the Legislature on the vanpool grant program established in the 2003 Legislative Transportation Package. The Task Force affirmed its support for the vanpool program, highlighting growth in the number of operating vanpools and success at achieving increased collaboration and coordination among the state's vanpool operators. Between July 2003 and December 2004 the number of commuters arriving to work in vanpools statewide increased by nearly ten percent to almost 14,000 daily riders.



Announcements

ACCT Analyst Leaves to Join California Legislative Staff

Seija Blaylock, staff to the ACCT (Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation) accepted a position with the California Legislative Analyst's Office as a policy and fiscal analyst. Blaylock joined the council staff in March 2004 and worked tirelessly on the performance measures analysis, Trip Planner program and special transportation needs grants. Her last day at WSDOT will be May 6th. All the best, Seija!

New Staff Joins the Public Transportation and Rail Division

Transportation planners Janice Hamil, Robin Hartsell and Keith Cotton have recently joined the Public Transportation and Rail Division from other areas of WSDOT. Janice Hamil will be based in Seattle and support the newly created Office of Transit Mobility and manage the park and ride lot program; Robin will manage the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program and the CTR performance grants; and Keith will help the CTR Task Force develop its legislative report for 2005 and provide training and technical support to the CTR counties. Janice leaves the Urban Planning Office as a planner/modeler where she analyzed travel impacts from the I-90 bridge expansion, and performed HOT (high occupancy toll) lanes and HOV analysis. Robin and Keith each gained valuable WSDOT-wide experience in the agency's Strategic Assessment Office (the producer of our Grey Notebook) and bring new perspectives to the division for reshaping the CTR Program.

Contact information

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Upcoming Events

CTR Task Force Meetings

May 27 and June 24

11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., preceded by subcommittee meetings. To confirm times and locations, contact Shelley Pedro at pedros@wsdot.wa.gov or (360) 705-7846.

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/taskforce/tfdescription.cfm>

Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation Meetings

June 3, August 5, October 7, and December 2

9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WSDOT's Headquarters Building, Commission Boardroom

Olympia

www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm

29th Annual Washington State Public Transportation Conference

August 22-24, 2005

Double Tree Hotel Seattle Airport

SeaTac

www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference

The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division prepares this monthly newsletter as a service to those interested in the division's activities. To receive your own copy via e-mail or for questions regarding newsletter articles, please contact Tonia Buell, communications manager, at 360-705-7439 or buellt@wsdot.wa.gov.